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The HISTORY of EAST BRIDGEWATER

BY PAUL JOHN RICH



Town Hall, East Bridgewater.

The Indian Raid — The Sheldon Murder
Odd Characters of the Past
The Town's Biggest Fire
and Oldest (107 Years) Citizen —
With Maps and Engravings

The Arthur Baggia Press, East Bridgewater, Mass.

THE MILLET SANATORIUM.

Located in East Bridgewater is conducted and owned by Dr. Charles S. Millett of Brockton. The old fashioned house, which has been thoroughly remodelled and modernized, together with the spacious grounds, makes an ideal private hospital for the many patients.



The out-door sleeping apartments give the patients the benefit of the modern methods used in the treatment of tubercular troubles, and the presence of skilled physicians and trained nurses assures competent care. The Millet Sanatorium has been established a number of years and the numerous cases which have been treated there bear testimony to its worth.

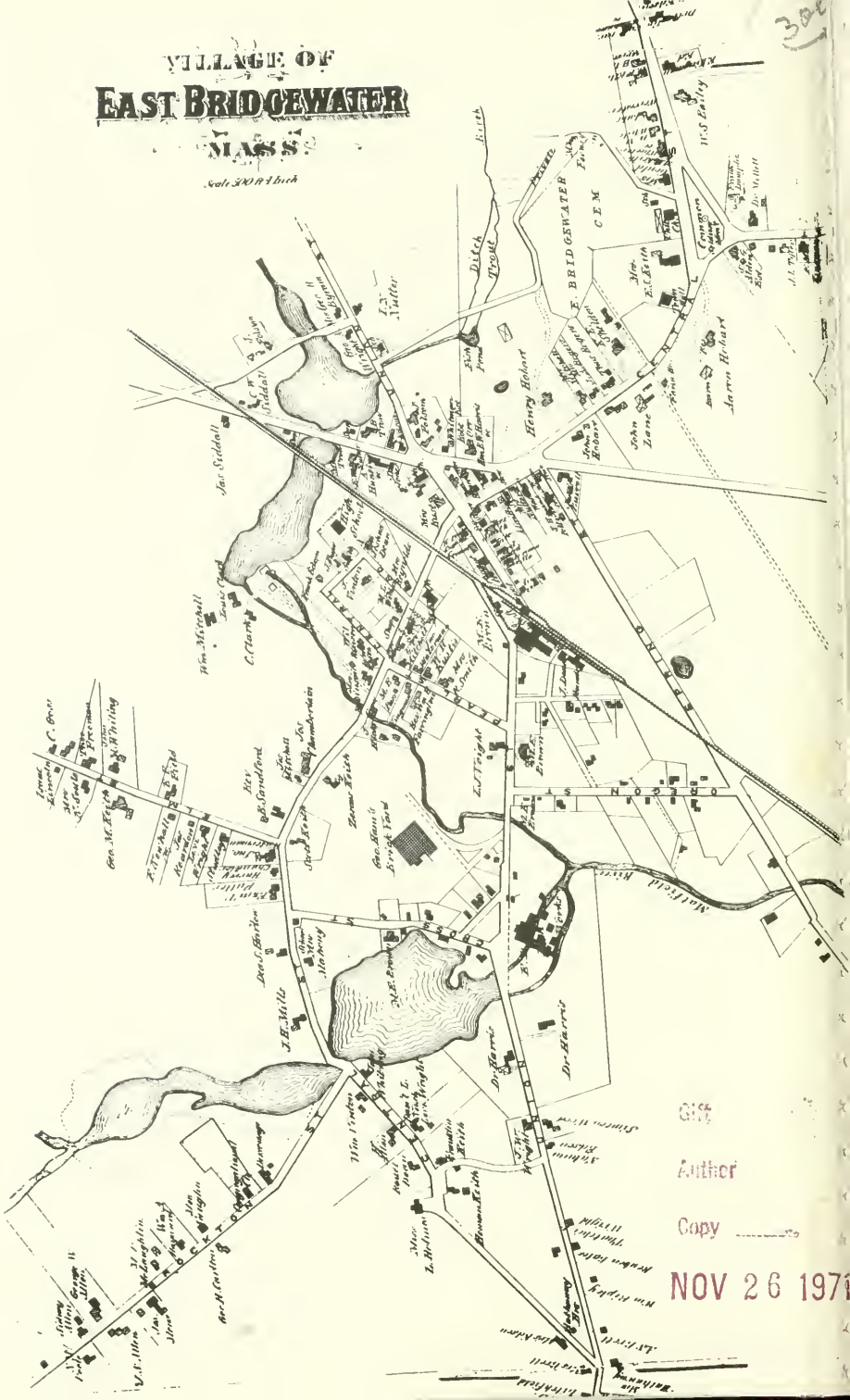


UNITARIAN CHURCH
11 A.M. SUNDAY
REV. PAUL JOHN RICH

VILLAGE OF EAST BRIDGEWATER

MASS.

Scale 2000 Feet



Gift

Author

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NOV 26 1971

PREFACE & NOTES

East Bridgewater is certainly very old, but poor in its written history. Its stories will vanish forever unless secured in this generation. This little book of mine is also a plea for the help of those who have materials about the town.

It is a peculiar idea that tomorrow can be faced without trying to understand the past. The man with no roots is bound to repeat his ancestors' errors. In a few years I would like to publish a complete history of the town, hardbound and about 300 pages in length. Anything you can do to provide me with stories for it will be warmly received.

Those who are curious about the age of their house or any other historical point are invited to use the large collection of old maps and plans that we have at the church. There are many questions that I have about the town that I hope someday to find the answers to — I would like to know about the successive waves of integration, about the changes over the centuries in the school curriculum, about the part the town played in the various state and national elections. Much of the material for answering such questions is already available in raw form and needs only patient study.

I wish to express my appreciation to Miss Mildred Simpson, Mrs. Grace Eastman, Mrs. Ruth Thayer, and Mrs. Jane Doherty for helping me with this, and to respectfully dedicate it to my parents in anticipation of a fuller work.

PAUL JOHN RICH

East Bridgewater



1. THE BEGINNINGS OF EAST BRIDGEWATER

Shortly after the retreat of the last great ice age, the first men appeared in East Bridgewater. What little is known about them is thanks to the work of Maurice Robbins and the Massachusetts Archaeological Society. Their digs on the South Shore have completely changed ideas of what New England was like in prehistoric times.

The excavations in this area show that the first residents of East Bridgewater were men of considerable energy who erected large round houses or temples, cremated their dead, and painted themselves with a clay that turned blood red when wet. When people dig cellars or plow in this area they come across reminders of the mysterious past — axes, mortars, blades of stone. Particularly near Robbins Pond and along the banks of the Satucket River are caches of the early inhabitants. They were not Indians. The Indians came later.

When the Indians did come, they made East Bridgewater one of their principal centers. Satucket, as we now spell it, means “the place where rivers meet.” About thirty yards north of the fish weir in the river, a weir that can still be seen when the water is down, the Indians had a clearing where they gathered for festivals. The land was held by the Wampanoags, who became inhibited, then poxed, and finally extinct under the white man’s occupation. The last East Bridgewater Indian, given the Christian name of Robert Pegin, died in 1815.

East Bridgewater was granted by Plymouth Colony to the people of Duxbury as compensation for the part of their town known as Marshfield, lost when Marshfield split off from them. A team headed by Captain Myles Standish obtained title by negotiations with the Wampanoags carried out in March of 1649 at Sachem’s Rock, a jagged outcropping located on the land now of Dr. and Mrs. Donald Bannerman, southeast of the Carver Cotton Gin Company. The area bought included Brockton, all the Bridgewaters, and parts of Abington, Hanson and Middleboro.

The Indian that Captain Standish bartered with was Massasoit, and the deed he gave Standish still exists, marked with his signet in the shape of a hand. All of the territory passed for a value of less than \$30. — the price was seven coats, nine hatchets, eight hoes, and twenty knives, along with four moose skins and ten and a half yards of cotton.

The original town of Bridgewater that resulted from the purchase was the first interior settlement of the Old Colony. Many of the people who moved to East Bridgewater were the sons and grandsons of the very first Plymouth settlers. They set aside house lots laterally by the rivers, about six acres each. The first house in East Bridgewater was built by Samuel Allen Jr., who moved from East Braintree in 1660. He built on the east side of the Matfield River. His land included what is now East Bridgewater center, with the cemetery and common and property of the First Church. After Allen settled, next to come was Josiah Standish, his brother-

in-law. In 1662, Nicholas Byran arrived from Weymouth and built a house on Snell Meadow Brook. He owned five shares of the original 56 shares that the Standish purchase had been divided into. Another early homesteader was Thomas Whitman, from Weymouth. Born in England and first settled in Weymouth, he is the ancestor of most of the Whitmans in America. He built along the Matfield in 1662. In 1663, Robert Latham built on the Satucket, approximately where the Carver plant is now. Here he erected a saw mill and cut lumber for his neighbors.

All of these original houses with the exception of Byran's were burned to the ground on Sunday morning, April 9, 1676. The Indians surprised the settlement and destroyed East Bridgewater. The only house spared owed its good fortune to the fact that Byran had an orchard and supplied the Wampanoags with hard cider.

Rebuilding took place immediately, aided by donations from England. Others populated the river banks — Experience Mitchell who came over on the famous ship "Ann" arrived in 1689 with his son Edward and started the Elmwood district. Issaic Harris brought his sons Issaic and Samuel and built on the Satucket.

Francis and James Cary settled in 1685, Francis in Elmwood and James in the Beaver district near the Brockton line. Issaic Alden built in Beaver too, in 1685. Joseph Shaw moved from Weymouth in 1696 to Beaver, and built on the Matfield the first grist mill in town.

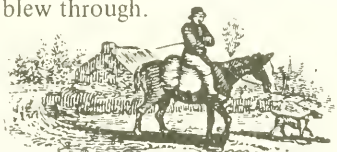
In 1785 there was a population of 959 with 157 families living in a total of 142 houses. Of course it was really still a district or parish and did not become a town until the 19th century, with intervening changes in its boundaries and structure. In 1810, the population was 1195. In 1820, 1435. In 1830, 1653. In 1837, 1927. During those early years, East Bridgewater was considerably bigger than West Bridgewater and the same size as Brockton (called then North Bridgewater).

Early living conditions in the town were described in an anniversary address made by Benjamin Harris on June 3, 1856. Looking back, Harris remarked that the houses in East Bridgewater at the turn of the century (1800) were without paint inside or out, and the churches were similarly bare. Furniture was simple — no cushions, no carpets. As for music, he remarked that the only music East Bridgewater knew then was the spinning wheel heard in every home. He grumbled, "Instead of this helpful music we now have the sickening piano, suggestive of nothing than effemine luxury and the want of better employment." Harris described the people as plain and homespun. He went on, "Who dares now to retire for the night without fastening his doors and windows. How much of the quality of conditions is conducive to good fellowship? How is it with religious fellowship? At the close of the last century no clergyman was ever settled that

did not spend his days here. How has it been since? Since the commencement of the present century, there have been settled no less than six ministers, five of whom are now living, and there are now in the same town, three other societies neither of the ministers of which can agree on an exchange with either of the others." In short, things had gone to the dogs.

Certainly all of the curious personalities to inhabit East Bridgewater during its beginnings, the most epic was Deacon John Whitman, born in 1735 and died in 1842 at the age of 107 years and three months. In the memoir of Whitman, by his own son Jason, we find many anecdotes about the town. The food in East Bridgewater during Deacon Whitman's life is described as mostly boiled salt beef or boiled pork. It was boiled in water thickened with a little Indian meal or some beans and then the liquid was used for supper and breakfast as well as dinner. The early settlers noticed the cold too, going by Whitman's remarks concerning the many holes in their buildings that the snow blew through.

In the 1740's the Great Revival or Great Awakening took place in New England and was promoted by the Reverend George Whitefield, a contemporary of John and Charles Wesley. When Whitefield, a bold and loud Evangelical, came to town, Reverend John Angier refused to let him use the meetinghouse. Poor Whitefield has gone down in history as one of the great preachers in Christendom — but when he came to East Bridgewater he had to speak in a barn. The Byram family was so incensed at Reverend Angier because of this slight (they had invited Whitefield) that they removed themselves to New Jersey. In this controversy, the good Deacon supported his minister.



Whitman told of being in Church one Sunday during the Revolution when British ships were sighted off the coast of Plymouth. The whole congregation fled the church and made their houses ready for invasion. Whitman's wife helped him pack cartridges and bolt the door. Fortunately there was no attack.

Although it was 200 years ago, Whitman's ups and downs sound similar to our own. At the age of 95, he decided that by giving up meat he would be in better health and he went on a milk diet. At the age of 100, he concluded it made no difference and went back to a mixed table.



Coffee in East Bridgewater, according to Deacon Whitman, was made by burning and pounding a crust of bread. It was usually well doctored with milk and sugar. In fact, he said, it was often little else than cream or milk with a bit of burnt bread.

During all his 107 years, from the time of his baptism by Reverend Angier until his death, the Deacon was a loyal member of the First Church. When the time came that others left to form the other churches of the town, the Deacon was asked, "How can you, Deacon Whitman, assist in settling Mr. Flint who is known as a Unitarian?" Deacon Whitman answered, "I have never called myself by sectarian names, I never liked any of your sectarian names; if I must take a name, I should prefer to be called a Christian. Mr. Flint's preaching seems to me to be religious and therefore I am willing to take part in settling him."

Referring back to the troubles when Whitefield came to East Bridgewater and preached in the barn, the Deacon was asked by one son, the Reverend Nathaniel Whitman, "Did you date your conversion from the preaching of Whitefield?" Whitman answered with much energy, "Date my conversion from the preaching of Whitefield? No, I have never yet dated my conversion. I know of no other way of salvation than by a patient continuance in well-doing until the end." Three of his sons became Unitarian ministers and one eventually became minister of the First Church.

Dancing in the early days was frowned on and when young people in the same house as the Deacon took to dancing, even though he was nearly a hundred, he remarked, "Young people must be in motion and it is better that the motion be regular than that it should be irregular." Even in his last years, over 100 in age, if he saw a woman bringing a pail of water or lifting a log, he would attempt to help. When a woman entered the room, he insisted on rising.

In those days, the Universalist denomination was regarded with some scorn even by the Unitarians. The Universalists did not believe in hell and it was felt that they would tend towards immorality on that account. When the Universalists in East Bridgewater started a church in the Chamberlain tavern, then the Keith house and now the Napolitan house, Deacon Whitman was told who attended the meetings and he remarked that he had no doubt it would be a great improvement on their previous mode of spending Sunday, even if the preaching was not true!

The life of Deacon Whitman and the life of Mr. Prescott Washburn, still happily alive in his 90s, span together most of the recorded history of the Town of East Bridgewater. Between them they knew everyone who has ever been prominent here.

A confusing part of the tales about the early town is that the church and the government were the same. The same meetings transacted both the political and

religious business. For example, in the recordbook of the church for November, 1735, "The assessors brought in their charge for making the precinct rates the year past. Then the moderator put it to a vote whether they were willing to grant Rev. Pastor Mr. Angier anything more for his support for this year than his stated salary. They agreed to grant him something more for his support this year than his stated salary, 30 pounds more." On December 4, 1735, "The inhabitants of the East Precinct in Bridgewater met together and there was some discussion as to whether they proposed to take some legal methods for prosecuting the matter of becoming a township. Agreed in the affirmative." And on September 2, 1739, the records say, "It was put to a vote whether they chose two men as agents to give reasons to the General Court why the prayer of the West Precinct for some part of the East Precinct to be assessed to them should not be granted. Voted in the affirmative."

The point being that these records are now solely in the possession of the church, and the same meeting would wander from maintaining the roads to having the church bell rung, to the dispute with West Bridgewater. Everyone belonged at the same time to the church and the town.

The dispute with West Bridgewater was a hot one. On September 2, 1739, the clerk wrote, "Proposed to make these offers to the East Precinct that the ministers of West and East Precincts should be maintained out of one treasury. . ."

Deciding who would pay for what is still part of the problem of local government, and the dispute with West Bridgewater ended inconclusively when "Doctor Joseph Byran brought in charges in endeavoring to keep any part of our precinct from being part of the West Precinct. . . . granted to him by clear vote." (November 5, 1739).

In the very earliest times, the settlers went to what is now West Bridgewater to worship. West Bridgewater was not separate and has no more claim to be the original Bridgewater than East Bridgewater — they were parts of one whole, the original land grant of Standish. In 1723 the people in what is now East Bridgewater petitioned the General Court in Boston to be set off, which is the reason behind the land trouble referred to above. The thirteen families who petitioned agreed to assume the financial liabilities of such an incorporation. They also tried to get back the taxes they had paid West Bridgewater, but were not successful.

Even then the area of East Bridgewater had a number of little settlements within its boundaries. Elmwood was in the southwest part of the town and to this day has its own post office, store, and church. Beaver in the northwest part of the town had a big part in early manufacturing and got its name from the beaver dam in the stream running through it. Satucket was the area around the Carver Cotton factory. Northville was in the northeast part of the town and had a Methodist Church and a general store, both now gone. A cemetery there con—

tinues the name. Matfield clustered on Pleasant Street around the Congregationalist Church and included part of West Bridgewater. Auburnville was the northern part of the town and most of it was given up when Whitman was incorporated. Each of these tiny villages had its own school.

The first post office was established in November of 1799. Judge Nathan Mitchell got the appointment as first postmaster and kept the mail in his law office. Prior to 1799 there were only four post offices in the whole county, so getting a post office was quite a mark of progress. Mail in the 18th century went from East Bridgewater by horseback once a week on Thursdays. Sometimes the rider didn't come through until Sundays. Even that was an improvement over the original mail arrangements, for in earliest times one went to Weymouth to get or send letters.

The early tax rolls show that the total yearly taxes for a family were seldom for more than fifty or sixty cents. Of course people gave their labor on the roads and other projects. The big expense was keeping up the meetinghouse of First Church. This was taken care of by selling pews. You bought your seat and the seats were priced accordingly to how close up front they were. "The Pew in the side galleries in the Meeting House in the East Precinct of Bridgewater being four in number viz two on the men's side and two on the women's side will be sold at a Public Auction to the highest bidder on Monday, the 18th day of April at one o'clock in the afternoon at the aforesaid Meeting House." (November 8, 1762 records).

"November 10, 1769. Voted that the whole of the money due the Precinct for the sale of the Pews should be appropriate to the use of the English School." Here we have a clear example of the way the church and town were one. The money from selling the pews went to take care of the school.

As the town grew, it was necessary to divide the school into districts. "March 22, 1774. Voted to have the Precinct divided into School districts. Voted that a standing committee should divide the English School money belonging to said Precinct in the several districts according to the number of polls in said districts between three and sixteen years of age."



The town was also concerned with public health problems at an early date. "June 30, 1777. Voted to provide a proper house or houses for all those who may be or are the subjects of Small Pox. Not to allow any person who has had Small Pox to go beyond their limits until they have a certificate from a Doctor that they have recovered from the disease."

Men were much more clearly in charge in those days than now. The church records repeatedly show that the women and men were seated on separate sides of the meetinghouse and all the offices were held by men — not a woman appears until the 20th century.

The Revere Bell, one of the great treasures in the town, first appears in the records on September 7, 1795, when the meeting voted to purchase "a bell." Since Revere cast the bell in 1804, we wonder if it took that long to get it? As late as 1816, the town meeting was taken up with a debate over whether to have singing in church. After two meetings, they decided to purchase eighteen hymn books. It wasn't until the 28th of May, 1823, that the parish voted to separate town and church affairs and thus to end the unique and to us confusing system of doing everything within the same organization.

Although East Bridgewater was only touched by the events of the 18th century, not being the site of any wars like the early Indian raid that destroyed its first homes, it was part of a national scene that made it relatively more important than today. In 1790 New York City had a population of 33,000 and Boston had 8,000 residents. Old Bridgewater, including Brockton and the other two Bridgewater, had a population of 4,975. Thus the Bridgewaters were a third the size of Boston and one-sixth the size of New York. Maine was still part of Massachusetts. Kentucky was part of Virginia. The states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin were part of Minnesota and Tennessee was part of North Carolina. A journey from New York to Washington took eight days. There were 5,100 houses in Plymouth County and a total of 7,500 families. The total population of the county was 29,535. In comparison with the rest of the nation, the Bridgewater was important.

Every town has its characters. In East Bridgewater in the 1700's they included Barnabus Seabury, the cooper . . . born in North Yarmouth, Maine, he attended Harvard for a year in the Class of 1719. He made the town's barrels and boxes and was able to outdrink any ten men.

Also important was John Holman. Born in Milton in 1678, he was Harvard, Class of 1700. He married the daughter of a Boston goldsmith and moved to East Bridgewater in 1727. Because of his close friendship with a royal governor, Jonathan Belcher, he was appointed Sheriff of Plymouth County. The governor wrote him, "How could you be so silly and abandoned to all rational thinking as to sell your sheriff's post to Col. Warren for the small trifling sum of 200 pounds —

a place of honor and profit worth more than 300 pounds a year." Apparently politics even then had its venial side. This was not the only favor Holman received. In 1732, the governor offered him a major's commission for a new regiment to be recruited from the county. Belcher also used him to manage his mines and other business holdings, to supervise the making and selling of shingles on the governor's Abington farm, and other sundries. Over the shingle business the two cronies fell out. Holman was accused of cheating on his accounts. To add to his troubles, his first wife died in 1740 and his second wife was not an unmixed blessing, for in the *Boston Post* the following advertisement appeared, "Whereas Arrabella Holman in Newport in the Province of Massachusetts Bay absolutely (sic) refuses and declines to cohabit with me at my house in said Bridgewater but keeps still at Newport where she is continually running me in debt and exposing me to many law suits of which I have had some late experience; this is to warn and caution all people from entrusting her with any kind of goods of workmanship on my account. I will not pay them if they do. John Holman." In later years, Holman was made a colonel. East Bridgewater's most prominent politician-sheriff died on May 26, 1759.

Eliab Byran was born in East Bridgewater on December 4, 1718, the son of Captain Ebeneziel and Hannah Byran. In November of 1741 he accompanied Elizah Wheelock in a preaching tour through the Old Colony that helped start the Great Awakening. (Note that like many early New England families, the Byrans spelled their name variously — Byram, Bryan, Byrane, Bryram.) Byran was a member of the Harvard Class of 1740. After preaching in Titicut, he decided to go to New Jersey, but came back in time to get involved in the famous incident with Angier over the invitation to George Whitefield. He and his family permanently moved to Rocksitucus in Morris County, New Jersey, in protest over Angier's treatment of Whitefield. There Eliab started his own church. He died in 1754 a his grave alone marks the site of the church and small settlement which started as a result of an East Bridgewater dispute.

When should East Bridgewater celebrate its birthday? In 1721, according to a diary kept by James Carey, a meetinghouse was raised so people wouldn't have to go over to West Bridgewater for worship. But as we see in the records, the fuss over separation went on over many years. The land for the meetinghouse was given by Samuel Allen, the son of the Samuel Allen who had been one of the first settlers. He deeded as follows, "For and in consideration the regard he had had for settling the ministry in the east end of the north precinct in Bridgewater, did grant, make over, convey and confirm unto the said east end of the north precinct designing with submission to the authority to be a distinct precinct, to their proper use behouth and disposal, a certain small piece of land lying in Bridgewater aforesaid on which the frame, the meetinghouse nearly erected in said place now

standeth for conveniency about said meetinghouse." So 1721 or 1723 could be taken as founding dates, since the building went up in 1721 and the parish was incorporated on December 14, 1723. Or one could take the much later date in the 1800s when the town and church were separated.

The principal citizen of East Bridgewater in the eighteenth century was the Reverend John Angier, the first minister of the town. Angier was the grandson of a president of Harvard, Uriah Oakes. He graduated from there in 1720 and taught in Scituate before his call to the First Church. He served as minister for 62 years until his death on April 14, 1787. His gravestone shows him with wig and long gown in his pulpit.

Plymouth Street owes its origin to the ordination of Mr. Angier. The old road from Boston to Plymouth passed by the meetinghouse and tavern to the west of what is now Plymouth Street. It was declared to be too long a distance from the river for the ecclesiastical council that ordained Angier to walk to their meal. So young men of the church cut Plymouth Street down to the river. Along this avenue the guests went to near what is now the Dr. Orr House, where a long table was arranged from east to west, shaded by four apple trees. A temporary oven had been built in the rocks in which the meats were cooked and the beans we are told were served on pewter plates.

Reverend John Angier's life was punctuated by a great tragedy. In July 1747, his wife and three eldest children died within 18 days of each other from pneumonia. His wife got her fatal illness from visiting the sick of the parish. He was left with the three youngest children — Mary, Samuel and Oakes, to raise. His sister Eunice helped him do this. Angier's daughter Mary married the Reverend Ethram Hyde from Rehoboth. Angier's son succeeded him, the Reverend Samuel Angier. Samuel Angier was the last man in the town to wear a three-cornered hat, wig, and knee buckles. At the close of worship every Sunday he passed down the aisle, bowing politely to the congregation. A bachelor until 53, he married Judith Smith, daughter of the minister in Pembroke. She was killed on Plymouth Street in June of 1798 when she was going down the hill on horseback and was thrown. With Angier's death in 1804, the tension between those who wanted to continue the old arrangement of the town and church being combined, and those who wanted to separate the two came to a head.

Under the Angiers, the First Church had gradually departed from traditional views of Jesus and the Bible. In the Matfield section of town, several of the families held their own religious meetings at which the more conservative teachings were heard. Finally they organized the Union Trinitarian Society of East and West Bridgewater. This group itself split into two churches, one of which survives as the Union Congregational Church. The other group were followers of Reverend B. Sanford, a Brown graduate who for a time had his own church on North Central Street near the corner of Elm Street.

The Swedenborgians began the church in Elmwood in 1838 and built the present church in 1854. Their most famous minister was Timothy Otis Payne. Payne was world famous for his studies of ancient Egypt and he translated the Egyptian Book of the Dead into English.

There were three Methodist churches in East Bridgewater. One started in 1842 and closed in 1849. Another in Northville started in 1849 and closed in 1860. The present Methodist Church originated in 1856 and started by meeting in a building first used by the Universalists on the site of the present public library and used after the Methodists by the Catholics.

The public library site was certainly the holiest in town, because the church there that the Universalists originally built got subsequent use by both the Methodists and the Catholics before burning down. When it burnt, the Catholic church was built adjacent to the Unitarian meetinghouse and Common, then itself burnt down and was replaced by the present building. The original Union Congregational building also burnt, so there have been three church fires in the town.

It is in the old cemeteries that the earliest history is most graphically preserved. The oldest of all is the plot facing the Town Hall. The graves there go back as far as 1685. One of the first things that John Angier did when he came as minister was to cut initials and dates upon the stones that he found in that already somewhat ancient graveyard. The Central Cemetery immediately adjoins the old yard but is distinct from it. In the old yard we find some ripe ages — Experience Mitchell lived to 90, William Cronin lived to 86, Samuel Bass lived to 91, John Angier to 85. No one can quite measure up to John Whitman's 107.

The yard has graves of many who fought in the early wars. The French and Indian War, the Revolution, the War of 1812. In the Revolutionary War, the town responded quickly. Some men marched to Lexington and Concord in the first call of April 19, 1775. Pews in the church were sold to provide money for outfitting the soldiers. It was the Civil War that really took its toll on the town, for no less than 47 young men from the population of just over 2,000 were killed.

Because of its rivers, East Bridgewater was settled early. We have seen that the original settlers lived on the river and a canoe trip up the Satucket even today will give some of the flavor of their life. At one time there were 22 mills in the town. The first mill was a saw mill built by Robert Latham, just prior to King Phillips Indian War, perhaps in 1667. Joseph Shaw put up a grist mill on the Salisbury River in 1700. John Whitman built a saw mill above Forge Pond about the same time. In 1740, Hugh Orr built a dam on the Matfield and erected a trip-hammer shop and made scythes. During the Revolution he turned to the manufacture of cannon, iron products, and guns.

East Bridgewater's first doctor was Isaac Otis, Harvard 1738. On June 30, 1746, he married Mehitabel, daughter of Captain Jonathan Bass of the town and

so came here to practice medicine for the rest of his life. Some of his records are preserved in the restored apothecary shop and medical museum on Plymouth Street known as the Dr. Orr House. Often he bartered his services for grain or a day's work by the patient in his fields. He died on December 9, 1785, of billious cholic. His epitaph reads, "Thus dies the great man of skill."

Dr. Hector Orr was the most famous physican to practice in the parish. He was born in town on March 24, 1770 and graduated from Harvard in 1792. After apprentising with a doctor in Randolph, he was commissioned in 1796 by President John Adams and went to India on a celebrated expedition commanded by Commodore Preble. A great Freemason and confident of Paul Revere, he organized a lodge that still continues as Fellowship Lodge of Bridgewater. Fellowship Lodge's records reveal that the first meeting was in East Bridgewater at the First Church. "November 3, 5797 (sic). The Most Worshipful Paul Revere, Grand Master, being then placed in the Chair, a Grand Lodge was opened. A Procession was then formed in Masonic order and proceeded to the Reverend Samuel Angier's meeting house, where a sermon was delivered by our Rev. Brother Thaddeus Mason Harris, and an oration by the Right Worshipful Hector Orr." After Orr died in 1855 he was succeeded by his son, Samuel Orr, who died in 1878 -- nearly 80 years of medical practice in the town between the two of them.

Through the 1700s negro slaves were kept by some of the people. The church records show this. Angier wrote, "August 22nd, 1734 I marry'd the negro man that belongs to John Johnson and the negro woman that belongs to Sam'l Beale." "Febry. 6th, 1772 Nathan Mitchel's negro man marry'd to a maulatto girl brought up by Anthony Winslow." Otis owned the first slave in the town, a woman named Ailla.

General Sylvanius Lazell, who lived in the house on the corner of Central and Bedford Streets where the nursing home is now located, was one of the wealthiest men in the town during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. He manufactured nails and reputedly produced 80 tons of them a year. He controlled the turnpike that ran by his house from New Bedford to Boston. General Lazell's turnpike company was known as the New Bedford and Bridgewater Turnpike Corporation, but despite its name, it never got as far as New Bedford. Its southern terminus was the post office near the Great Ponds in Middleboro. It was said to derive its success from the devout nature of its route which passed as near as possible to six churches.

Accordingly to Benjamin Keith, there was a fellow named Nathan Johnson who liked to bedevil the General. On one occasion he took Lazell's prize turkey and threw it down a well and then told the General that the turkey had flown down the well. To get it out, Lazell had to give Johnson the turkey. Another time, Johnson agreed to butcher a hog for General Lazell if he could have the

head. When he cut the head off, he cut it so far down that he got most of the pig. Johnson remarked to Angier's successor, Rev. James Flint, "Look here Mr. Flint, it's of no use for you to pray for rain until the wind changes."

The man who got East Bridgewater into shoe making was Edward Mitchell. The industry began in the southern part of town known as Joppa or Elmwood. Elmwood was originally called Joppa, but Reverend Timothy Otis Payne of the Swedenborgian Church thought that Elmwood sounded better. He was vigorously opposed by Seth Bryant. A meeting was called and a Mr. Newton Kean said that the change could not be made without getting the permission of every man, woman, and child in the place. Rev. Payne however got up a petition, went to Washington, and managed to get the name changed. Bryant was so mad, he moved away. At the corner of West and Bedford Streets in Elmwood there is a famous old tannery stone which was in use from 1700 to 1835. Mitchell had his tannery on the west side of Bedford Street and when the tannery was torn down, the stone was rolled into a field and abandoned. Years later, a Mr. Alfred Parker went searching for it after hearing from his grandparents of an old stone with a square opening in the center. He couldn't find it until one day while bicycling in Bridgewater he came upon the stone set in a wall. The owner of the Bridgewater property had hauled stones to his farm including Mitchell's. Prior to the 100th anniversary of the incorporation of East Bridgewater in 1923, Mr. Parker brought the stone back and set it up where it now is.

This is not the only piece of historic East Bridgewater to go traveling. The old academy which in 1818 stood on Central Street to the west of the cemetery finally was moved to Keith Place, where it can be recognized despite its metamorphosis into a private house.

Much of the past is of course gone. At one time there was a dam across the stream on the left side of Pleasant Street and a huge flax mill and grist mill, and a trip hammer and blacksmith shop. There Captain Vinton made scythes for all the surrounding towns. Below on the same stream was a rolling and slitting mill for slitting iron for machine hammered nails. Supposedly almost every house and barn built in Massachusetts used something made in East Bridgewater. On the site of the present Savings Bank was a deep cellar where ice was kept by Jason and White. Covered with woolen cloth it stayed there well into August.

Elijah Carver is the only one of the early businessmen whose name is still preserved in the name of a company. He lived in Natchez, Mississippi as a young man and there learned about cotton gins. It was said that Elijah Carver was to the cotton gin what James Watt was to the steam engine. He was decorated by the government of India, which gave him a gold medal and 2500 rupees for his inventions. When he came to the end of his life, Carver built an addition to the house of his niece on Plymouth Street so he could watch the mill. That was his great success.

A friend of Carver's was Ezra Kingman, who represented the town in the General Court for six years. Kingman was an exquisite flute player and it was he who introduced music into the services of the First Church. Previously it had been frowned on.

Not all the business started in town were successful. The first bank failed despite the many prominent men associated with it. All the money was put into Western land speculation. Large loans were made without security and the bank went under. Its building still survives. It is the house that Mr. Richard Whitmarsh lives in next to the Savings Bank. In existence is money printed in East Bridgewater from the time when the banks were allowed to issue their own currency.

On the failure of the bank, Herman Washburn composed a ballad. "Come, come my friends and lend an ear and listen to my song, I'll tell you facts which have occurred as thus we pass along: There was a bank got up in town — the peoples' admiration, but soon they found it was to aid in western speculation. The President we all do know; he took his post so grand, and lent the money to his sons to pay for western land. This President when once a Judge, the people he did ride, and from the path of honesty his feet have turned aside." Since the man mentioned in the ballad still has descendants in town, we shall not mention his name.

Nor were town meetings always placed, as shown in a ballad which circulated called "Town Meeting Song: and sung to the tune of Yankee Doodle. "In East Bridgewater, as I learned, they had a great town meeting; they nail a notice on the door and I believe they called it Greeting. Yankee Doodle is the tune, two Yankees is promoting. 'Twill do to whistle, sing or play, and just the thing for voting."

One of the most interesting old records is a faithful diary of the East Bridgewater weather kept by Leonard Hill from 1806 to 1869. It is a precise record of the weather in East Bridgewater for every day from all those years. Hill records that on July 14, 1811, the temperature in East Bridgewater reached 109 and was followed by four consecutive days of temperatures over 100. His cold weather records included January of 1857 with 15 days below zero. The coldest day was on January 24, 1857, when the glass read 23° below. Of the winter of 1868, he said, "It has not thawed all night from November 30th to March 6." He also mentioned the great arctic winter of 1810, which was the coldest winter ever known in New England. Calling it "Cold Friday" he wrote that on January 19, 1810, the temperature went to 33° below. It was 25° below the next day, then 24° below, 17° below, and then 11° below. A cold week in that memorable winter. But the winter of 1819 was altogether different. Frogs were out in February. "Hot as June" wrote Hill on February 12, "71° and no frost since January 14" was his note for February 13. There was no winter like it until the one of 1868, which was equally warm. The summer of 1826 was the wettest, with 21 days of rain in August alone.

During the war of 1812, the East Bridgewater Light Infantry was ordered to go to Boston, Cushing Mitchell was in command. They duly reported to Boston and were stationed on Dorchester Heights. William Harris, father of the Honorable D.W. Harris who lived near Sachem's Rock was the only one who knew how to give the challenge and demand the countersign — an indication of the lack of training of the soldiers. But they became one of the best companies in the state and held Dorchester Heights for two months. On the first Sunday after their return, they marched in their uniforms to the Unitarian Church and Reverend Mr. Flint gave them what the soldiers called, "A rousing good sermon."

One of the more facinating volumes in the First Church archives is the original minute book of the East Bridgewater Manufacturing Co. which was the predecessor of the Carver Cotton Gin Co. In a firm script the records of the company are set down. The shares were divided among Samuel Rogers, Samuel Keene, Wallace Rusk, Allen Whitman, Nathaniel Wheeler and Seth Allen. Another interesting book in posession of the Church is the early police record listing the various offenses. We notice that the offenses are rather similar to failings of our present generation. The selling of liquor illegally, beating and torturing a horse, common drunkenness, assault and battery, larceny of wood, assault, disturbing the meeting on the Lord's Day, concealment of goods, larceny of soap, malicious destruction of property, receiving stolen goods, malicious mischief, burning a store, disturbing the peace, embezzlement of money, fornication, adultery, being a stubborn child, breaking glass windows, extorting money, keeping a growling dog, threat and abuse, entering a dwelling house in the night time with the intent to commit larceny and so on.

Some of the more noble of the citizens of East Bridgewater in the Nineteenth Century appear in the old police blotter and many a geneologist would be horrified to discover that his family tree included fornicators and larcenists.

Still another set of books of great interest are three ledgers of The General Store in East Bridgewater over a period from 1780 until the 1820's. The ledgers of Joseph Chamberlin's store included most of the names we are already familiar with: Dr. Orr, Dr. Otis. the minister Rev. Samuel Angier, and others. Looking at Samuel Angier's account in the old book, we find in the year 1800:

1801	June	To setting his horseshoes all around	2 shillings
	October	To setting his horses shoes all around	2 shillings
	December	To a staple and ring to his ox yoke	4 shillings
	March	To sharpening his cotter	3 shillings 6 pence
	April	To a quarter of veal that was 12 pounds at 5 pence a pound	5 shillings
	May	To half a bushel of seed corn	4 shillings 6 pence

1802	April	To a hoop	1 shilling
	May	Seed	1 shilling
			5 pence
	December	To a half a day in his woods	1 shilling
			7 pence
	December	To drawing three loads of wood	11 shillings

Chamberlin's account shows that the store not only provided food but services and that as late as 1802, East Bridgewater money was figured in shillings and pence.

The only literary magazine of any significance ever to be published in East Bridgewater was a Transcendentalist Journal, called *The Amaranth* or *Literary Portfolio*. The first issue appeared on October 6, 1832. It contained an article by John Greenleaf Whittier, reprints from the *London Literary Gazette*, and notices of local happenings. Later the magazine was shifted to Boston where it continued for a number of years. The notices in *The Amaranth* are such as these:

"Members of the East Bridgewater Temperance Society are notified to meet at the Academy on Monday evening next at 7 o'clock.

"Boston and Worcester Railroad. We understand that the excavation for this railroad is commenced eight miles or so to be completed in May next including the passage of Charles River.

"The Third Regiment of the First Brigade (Fifth Division) will parade in this town on Wednesday next.

"A meeting of the officers of the Third Regiment held at Smiths Hotel in this town on Monday last, John Torrey of Boston was elected Colonel, Vice Abraham Washburn resigned, Martin Casey of North Bridgewater, Lieutenant Colonel, Vice John Torrey promoted, John H. Hathaway of this town Major, Vice Martin Casey promoted."

Subscriptions to *The Amaranth* were \$1.00 payable in advance, or \$1.50 at the end of the year. This got the magazine into trouble because people didn't pay at the end of the year. Alas, East Bridgewater's only literary journal soon was in debt, and moved to Boston.

Included in the records of the old First Church during the Nineteenth Century are the ordinary business affairs of running a Parish. There is concern about the common being fenced. It became the complete charge of the Church following separation of the town and church. There are some humorous moments.

"May 24, 1834, Voted that the parish committee, tithing men and sexton be requested and directed to see that the boys are orderly on the Sabbath during the service and if any are found to be disorderly and disturbers of the meeting they be complained of before some magistrate in order that they may suffer the penalty of the law."

The town almost lost its ancient meetinghouse because during the years from 1839 to 1850 a group in the First Parish desired to tear down the building and erect a new one. It was voted on May 4, 1839, that the parish rebuild the church, but then on May 20, 1839, "Voted that a committee be chosen and instructed to have the roof of the church repaired, not to exceed \$25.00. Voted that they reconsider the vote respecting the erection of a new meetinghouse." On April 20, 1845, "Voted to postpone indefinitely the consideration of the Fifth Article in the Warrant which related to repairing the meetinghouse or building a new one." On May 18, 1849, "Voted to accept this report of the committee chosen to appraise the pews in the meetinghouse which was as follows: 'April 28, 1849' — we the subscribers having been chosen by the First Congregational Society in East Bridgewater to appraise the meetinghouse belonging to said Society have this day attended that duty and appraised said house exclusive of the bell in the interest which said Society have in their associated capacity, in said house and site, \$325.00 as will appear by the within plan upon which plan the price of each pew is made thereon accepting the 21 pews are appraised at 50 cents each." This appraisal was in connection with tearing the building down, for since the pews were owned by different families, the families would have to be reimbursed for the pews. On July 31, 1849, the parish voted, "To instruct the committee to contract for building a new meetinghouse. The contractors to have the old house and pay therefore to the pew owners \$325.00 the appraised value of the same. The contractors, after the new house is finished to convey the same to the Parish, reserving for themselves all the pews (except one for the use of the minister) as a fund for reimbursing to themselves the cost of said house."

But the old church survived. On April 11, 1850, "Voted that the Parish consent to have the meetinghouse altered and repaired in such a manner, that as a committee chosen by the Parish shall assent to, provided the whole expense of the house as it now stands and the alterations and repairs shall not exceed \$2500., and provided also that the same be done without any cost or charge to the Parish." On June 5, 1850 the Parish voted "To consent to have the meetinghouse turned around so as to have the East end thereof from the street. Voted that the meetinghouse be altered and repaired according to plan presented by the committee of subscribers, provided the cost shall not exceed \$3300.00." Apparently the alterations were a success, for on December 6, 1850 the church voted that the surplus money from the sale of pews be appropriated towards the purchase of an organ. The church was to go another hundred years before a debate would break out once again about whether it should be torn down or not. Indeed, The First Parish voted in 1961 to tear down the central meetinghouse. Once again, committees being what they are, this was not accomplished.

We scarcely know what to make of the vote of September 23, 1855, when, "Voted to choose a committee of three to cause the tombs in the old burying ground to be removed and to sell at auction the stone and after deducting the expenses of the sale to pay over the proceeds to the owners of the tombs."

The Reverend George Moore, a frail young graduate of Harvard Divinity School, wrote a copious diary and in it there are some remarks about the town. He said, "East Bridgewater, Friday, August 10, 1838, we saw Mr. Whitman the father of the late Bernard Whitman and of Jason Whitman of Portland who is now 103 years old. He walks about quite erect, has a full face and looks in good health. One would not think him more than 80 years old, he has been to town meetings and has always until recently kept up his interest in the affairs of the town; and inquired every Sabbath after the preacher, sermon, text. We also called at Mr. Ryder's school and on several families and drank tea at Mr. Nutter's where I became so engaged in talking about Cuba as to lose myself. On our return to the village of Joppa, we had a pleasant evening with Deacon Keene's where we are staying. . . . East Bridgewater, Saturday, August 11, 1838; Walked this morning over to South Bridgewater, two miles. It is a very pleasant village and the views all around are beautiful mingled with pine and oak groves. . . . East Bridgewater, Sunday, August 12, 18, 28; Went about yesterday p.m. with Mr. Barrett making several calls upon his parishioners, drank tea at the house of Mr. Nutter, addressed the Sabbath School at noon and felt myself the better for the effort. Attended a singing meeting in the village and heard some excellent songs. . . . Concord, Monday Evening, August 13, 1838, left the pleasant Village of Joppa in East Bridgewater this morning. My time was passed as pleasantly there as it could anywhere. Under existing circumstances, I have found the family of Deacon Keene very pleasant. Miss Suzanna is a Swedenborgian but she has a very pretty face. The Deacon is a man of few words; of course, he is *Deaconish* as it would not be proper for him to be otherwise. The Village of East Bridgewater I affect—there is a charming grouping of pine groves, hill and valley and level meadowlands and fields on the low ground in every direction and the people are pleasant — there is no aristocracy. When the lawyer gives a party, he invites shoemaker, tailor, farmer, and all who are respectable of whatever occupation. This is a charming country life for me where all the members feel an interest in the welfare of the rest."

In 1839, Mr. Moore came back and wrote as follows: "East Bridgewater, Sunday, September 1, 1839, came here yesterdays stage to supply the pulpit today; stopped at Deacon Robinson's and pleasant folk they are (a plain, homely farmer's family but none the less for that), preached in the morning my sermon on "Evil Works and Retribution" — and in the evening on "Conscience", to a congregation of about 200, people very attendant. They wished me to preach as a candidate, but I told them No. I can preach nowhere as a candidate at present. I

am glad that I came to this town to preach for my coming made me the means of getting them a good minister, and of getting a good minister a good parish. Knowing the situation of Mr. Cutler of Gardner, I recommended them to hear him preach and they seemed quite desirous of doing so. And wished me to write to him about it — made several calls and enjoyed my short stay very much.”

“Concord, September 2, 1839: Rode from East Bridgewater to Boston this morning, on the outside of the coach was a very pleasant driver. He heard me preach yesterday and was very free to talk about his own feelings. In regard to a future world, he said he knew nothing about it. He lived for the present — he always meant to do as well as he could — but he was for enjoying life as he went along. As to a future world he did not trouble himself about it — he saw men die and that might be the last of them for all he knew.”

Any trip to East Bridgewater in the early 19th century would have been by the New Bedford and Bridgewater Turnpike. It extended in a remarkably straight line through the villages of Titicut, Bridgewater, East Bridgewater, Whitman, Abington, and South Weymouth to a junction with the Braintree and Weymouth Turnpike in Weymouth, at the corner of Main and Washington Streets. The length was about 25 1/2 miles. The cost of construction of this remarkable road was \$49,662.50. Its chief fault seems to have been in not having reached New Bedford. —in turning its travelers off at a distance of 13 miles from the center, further away over torturous county roads. At its peak, one stage a day passed each way between Boston and New Bedford, and seven freight wagons each week. One toll gate stood at the southern end where the Lakeville town house now stands; another was in the Joppa. Plymouth County records show that the East Bridgewater part of the Turnpike was thrown open to the public free in December of 1829. It was not until 1847 until all parts of it were free road.

An Almanac of 1846 said of East Bridgewater, “A pleasant town, afforded a good water power for manufacturers, and has thus improved to considerable extent. Manufacturing consists of cotton goods, boots, shoes, nails, tacks, bar iron, bar iron, leather, lead pipe, chaises, window blinds, sashes and boxes. The manufacture of iron commenced here early after the settlement of the country. Cannons were cast during the Revolutionary War and since that time small arms have been made here to a considerable extent. The manufacture of nails and tacks have been very large and profitable. There are two pleasant villages in the town of which considerable business is transacted. A branch of the Old Colony Railroad from South Abington to Bridgewater passes near the Village of Joppa (six miles from the former, and two miles from the later, and twenty-six miles from Boston.)”

An 1869 Almanac, listing the inhabitants of the town gives us some of the occupations: farmer, laborer, molder, shoemaker, clerk, merchant, teamster, mason,

machinist, mechanic, millwright, nailer, hairdresser, postmaster, painter, cigar-maker, boxmaker, forgerman, tinsmith, furniture dealer, carpenter, expressman, physician, patternmaker, surveyor, tack manufacturer, peddler, clergyman, forgerman, coal dealer, lumber manufacturer, lawyer, wheelwright, jeweler, grocer, ship broker, town clerk, blacksmith, stone cutter, butcher, restorer, gardener.

The boundry line between East Bridgewater and Bridgewater was not settled until February 23, 1838. The boundry line between Halifax and East Bridgewater was established on April 11, 1857. Part of East Bridgewater was lost to the new town of South Abington (Whitman) on March 4, 1875 and part was annexed to Brockton on April 24, 1875. The date of the establishment of East Bridgewater, is of course, subsequent to the date of the earliest census. Therefore, it is hard to provide figures for its growth prior to its separate incorporation. In 1840 there was a population of 1,950. In 1850, the population had increased considerably to 2,545. In 1855, stood at 2,930, and in 1860 the population of East Bridgewater reached 3,207 — a level it was not to reach again for more than 60 years. Population then began to decrease and went down to 2,976 in 1865, came up a little to 3,017 in 1870 — decreased again to 2,808 in 1875 and again decreased to 2,710 in 1880, pulled back up again to 2,812 in 1885 and then to 2,911 in 1890 and finally decreased again to 2,894 in 1895. These increases and decreases, reflect the changes in town boundaries as well as social conditions.

There was a fuss in East Bridgewater in 1850 over slavery, when a number of people took the schoolhouse to hold an anti-slavery lecture in and a number of others tried to break the door in. People were indicted and bound over to the court. Nor were the religious affairs of East Bridgewater altogether rosy. In a note that appeared in a monthly religious magazine of August 1844, "Reverend Nathaniel Whitman was installed as pastor of the Unitarian Society in East Bridgewater on Wednesday, July 17, 1844. There were several appropriate illusions in the various exercises to those hallowed associations which cluster around this society. The effect of which was in a measure lost by the great length of the whole service. The new pastor is a son of the late venerable and esteemed Deacon John Whitman who died in 1842 at the advanced age of 107 years and 3 months having been a member of the East Bridgewater Church for 78 years. The society in East Bridgewater has known many discouragements and trials. Eight years have elapsed since they have had a settled minister. Yet, with a very few exceptions with or without a preacher, they have been constant in their weekly service. We hail it as a good omen; that a waste place in Zion has been restored."

When the Civil War broke out, a town meeting was held on the 27th of April, 1861. It was voted that the town would raise whatever money was necessary to uniform a volunteer company and provide for the family of every member. Four thousand dollars was voted on the spot and a town council voted to carry the

claim into effect. It was voted to pay every volunteer ten dollars a month while in active service, and it was resolved, "That the citizens of East Bridgewater this day in town meeting assembled do unanimously resolve that they will to the extent of their ability maintain and defend the integrity of the constitution and the union and uphold the government of the United States." During the 1860's there were frequent votes of the town regarding Civil War matters. A bounty was paid of \$100. to anyone who volunteered. This was later increased to \$150. All told East Bridgewater furnished 350 men and 14 of these were officers. The town voted a total of \$55,000 for the war. The ladies sewed voluminously. In 1873, at the instigation of the Ladies Sewing Circle of the First Parish, a granite monolith weighing 33 tons was placed on the Common with the names of the 47 young men who died, some at famous battles like Fair Oaks, Fredricksburg, Spottsylvania, Chattanooga, and Gettysburg.

In the southeast corner of the town is Robins Pond. It covers 125 acres and a little north of the center of the pond is a small island covered by trees which has been a favorite resort of pleasure parties. Ever since the first visit to Robins Pond by a white man (although many people have been attracted there in the summer) it was not known that any person ever drowned in it until during a picnic on the island on July 19, 1882 a severe storm occurred. A young man from West Bridgewater, Frank Howard, (only 29 years old) was sailing in a boat when the boom swinging around struck him on the head and knocked him into the water. He was rendered senseless and sank.

Formerly, the number of ailwives or herrings that came up the Satucket and spawned in Robins Pond was immense. The shade preferred the Matfield River and the shade weir was located on the Matfield. The Herring weir on the Satucket built by the Indians hundreds of years before was a stone sluice which might well be called a raceway. This surviving structure can still be seen when the water is low and drawn off, but since 1819 the herring have not made much of a run up the rivers for the coming of the mills and of pollution changed their natural habits.

One map reproduced in this volume shows East Bridgewater in 1879; we notice that the Roman Catholic Church is located at this time in the center of town where the Public Library is now located. The high school is at the end of what is now Keith Place, that the present location of the Catholic Church is occupied by the house of Mrs. Keith. The old Town Hall is standing on its site across from the house of Aaron Hobart which many years later was to become the Town Hall. The brick yard extensively occupied an area off Union Street between Union and Cental. The Iron Works are located on the Matfield off Union. Going up the street the onlookers will notice that the major part of Elm Street is settled, which comes as

a surprise because the street does not look like one of the older streets in East Bridgewater. On the corner of Elm and Central is the house of the Rev. Sanford which was later used as a church when Rev. Sanford resigned from the Congregationalist Society.

Down in Elmwood it would be noted that the edifice which is still obvious on West Street was then functioning as a school and the other district schools can be located such as the one next to the Unitarian Church facing the Common, and the school at the corner of Union and Hobart Streets. East Bridgewater had at one time nine different district schools. The other map which shows the entire confines of the town and also dates from 1879 is keyed to show the different districts such as Satucket, Eastville, Northville, Auburnville, and the town center itself. One can readily see how much of the land was lost to South Abington and how much the boundaries of the town were to change in subsequent years. The map also shows us how the rivers and the distribution of water from them has changed over the years.

In 1885, the entire budget of the entire town of East Bridgewater was \$19,785.00; schools accounted for \$5,600.00 of this; highways took \$3,000; support of the poor was \$3,000.00 and the decoration of soldiers' graves \$100.

The biggest disaster to ever hit East Bridgewater occurred on May 21, 1893, when a fire wiped out the Old Colony Iron Foundry and Machine Shop, levelled the Methodist Church and two large warehouses. The loss was estimated at \$100,000.00. At one time 15 of the buildings were on fire. The cause of the fire was said to be the flying spark from the engine of the locomotive. The air was filled with burning embers, said the report. The hose company from Elmwood responded quickly, as did Brockton and Bridgewater. It was said that had the fire broken out in the evening rather than in the afternoon, the entire town would have been destroyed.

The County of Plymouth, which in 1765 had a population of 25,777 and in 1800 a population of 32,302, had reached by 1860 a population of 64,768 and by 1895 a population of 101,498. The population of the county increased considerably more than the population of the town in the Nineteenth Century, from a percentage point of view. Looking at East Bridgewater in 1895, the population broke down this way: Of the 2,894 souls, 1,441 were male, 1,443 were female. There were 726 families in the town. There were 642 houses and 41 more of these were unoccupied at the time, making a total of 683 dwellings. Of those 642 occupied dwellings, 9 were one story, 479 were one story and an attic, 1 had a basement and one story, 7 had a basement, one story and an attic, 9 had two stories, 128 had two stories and an attic, one had a basement and two stories, and seven a basement, two stories and an attic. Six hundred and thirty nine of the houses in East Bridgewater in 1895 were made out of wood, 2 were made out of wood and brick, and none were made out of only brick. In that year, only fifteen

percent of East Bridgewater was foreign born; the rest were native. There were no colored people, Indians or Japanese. There was one lone Chinaman. There were 179 widows and only 79 widowers, 8 divorced men and 4 divorced women. Of the 2,894 people in East Bridgewater in 1895, 5 were born in California, 13 in Connecticut, 1 in Delaware, 1 in Florida, 2 in Georgia, 2 in Illinois, 2 in Indiana, 1 in Iowa, 1 in Louisiana, 115 in Maine, 1 in Maryland, 2,148 in Massachusetts. Of the Massachusetts born, 921 had been born in other towns with the remainder in East Bridgewater. One person born in Michigan, 1 in Minnesota, 2 in Missouri, 55 in New Hampshire, 7 in New Jersey, 37 in New York, 1 in North Carolina, 3 in Ohio, 3 in Pennsylvania, 26 in Rhode Island, 1 in South Carolina, 31 in Vermont, 3 in Virginia and 2 in Wisconsin. Of the 449 foreign born, 2 had been born in Austria, 12 in Canada, 111 in French Canada, 31 in England, 7 in Germany, 166 in Ireland, 1 in Japan, 8 in New Brunswick, 49 in Nova Scotia, 1 in Oceania, (Pago Pago) 7 in Poland, 17 in Portugal, 1 in Prince Edward Island, 1 in Russia, 12 in Scotland, 19 in Sweden and 1 in Wales. There were 47 people in the town that year who were 80 or over, and there were 49 children of a year or under. Nine schoolhouses — of which 1 was exclusively primary, 7 were primary and intermediate and one was high school. Unfortunates were in East Bridgewater in 1895 as well. The list of defective social and physical conditions in the census included paupers, 3; maimed, 5; paralytic, 3; insane, 3; idiotic, 3; blind, 6; and so on.

The average working man in East Bridgewater was taking home a yearly pay of \$580.54. The average salaried man in the town was taking home a pay of \$1,303.71.

Mrs. Louise Ripley, born in 1839, recollected in 1901 about life on Cinder Hill in the 19th Century. Cinder Hill is roughly the part of North Central Street as it ascends to meet West Union Street. She said, "In this neighborhood at the time were but four families. One family attended the Orthodox church (congregational), one attended the Methodist and one the Unitarian. The other family did not attend any church but called themselves Universalists. What is now Central Street was the main road from West Bridgewater to East Bridgewater until 1847 when the new road was built. (now known as Union Street—PJR). The four families had 15 children among them and they were sent to the local one room schoolhouse called District 8. I do not know what year it was built but in the 1840s it seemed like an old building. The old school stood near the road. It was painted white. There were three windows on each side and two in back. A broad stone step. A door facing north admitted us to the entry where after having left our outside garments, being sure not to leave them on a nail claimed by some other scholar we were ready to enter the schoolroom. On the left when we entered stood a waterpail and dipper. It was considered a privilege to go after the water. The well was about halfway between the school house and what was then the

Burrell house, although the well was the property of the Keiths across the road. The water was drawn by a wellsweep but the two boys who went after the water were never in a hurry and preferred to fish for the pail until they recovered it. It was not a deep well. Often the water was within three feet of the surface. When the water was brought in many hands were raised with "Please, teacher, may I pass the water?" At the right of the entrance in the winter stood the box stove with the funnel running the length of the room. The fire was supposed to be kindled by eight o'clock but the wood did not always burn readily, so we came in cold, crowding around the stove to get warm. In those days most of the children wore woolen dresses, their mothers knowing they were not so liable to catch fire. There were many days in winter that the room was not comfortable before afternoon. I never knew the school to close on account of weather. In the right hand corner stood the teacher's desk. In the summer term of 1856 there were 71 pupils — four under five of age. In the winter term there were seventy with three under five years. There were four rows of desks and benches, seven in a row, each bench seating two, bearing the initials and marks of those who had been scholars there — especially on the boy's side. The floor slanted from the back seat to the front and many the apples and inkstands that have gone the length of the seats to the space left in the floor for recitations, and once a dinner of bread and milk took the downward course. There were two terms a year, the spring term commencing the first Monday in May and ending in September. The second beginning the Monday after Thanksgiving and ending in February. The first day of school there was never any tardiness for all must be there in time to choose their seats and see the new teacher, for it was a new one every term. . . a man in the winter and a woman in the summer. The beginning of the new term the scholars would take their place in the class they were the previous term and the teacher would hear them recite two or three times. If it was thought they could go with a higher class they were put there. Every Wednesday afternoon was given up to writing and choosing sides which we all liked. I remember my first school dress. It was a plaid. My pantalettes tied on with garters reaching to the tops of my shoes which were made by a neighboring shoemaker. . . warm stockings knit by grandmother and a thick warm coat would complete my outfit. Three of the houses now standing on Cinder Hill I think were very old. My grandfather's house was built as early as 1770."

For well over 40 years, the organ at the Unitarian Church was blown by Asaph Beal. It is said that Asaph seldom missed a Sunday. There were no Sunday evening service at the Church and he, therefore, went around to other churches to blow on Sunday evenings. He always kept a hymn book by the pump and said that he pumped by note or pumped to the music. Born in Maine in 1837, he be-

came a shoemaker and lived most of his life in East Bridgewater, but is chiefly known for his organ blowing.

Reminiscing about the town in the 19th Century, Mr. Benjamin Keith who died in 1901 said, "The manner of living was very different from what it is now; we have luxuries now that were not known then. Almost every family had a cow and a pig and neighbors would exchange milk and make cheese. Each would carry milk and have it measured and the neighborhood all together would furnish milk for quite a large cheese and two or three milkings. Then, another neighbor would take his turn and make cheese. They would kill their pigs at different times and lend one another a piece of fresh pork so as to have fresh pork at different times during the winter. There were no meat carts then that peddled meat in the winter as there are now. Then families would buy a quarter of beef in the fall and salt it down in the barrel to eat through the winter, and if they wanted a piece of steak, would go to the barrel and cut off a piece of lean meat and soak it and fry it and the children would think it quite a variety. Corn and rye meal was the principal bread. Some flour would be bought at the store in 7 pound lots and corn would be carried to mill in bags. The miller would toll to pay for grinding: 2 quarts for grinding a bushel. There were three grist mills in the town, one at Satucket, Shaw's Mill, and the one near the cotton factory which did not operate long after I remember it. I have many a time taken a bag of corn on my shoulders and carried it to Shaw's Mill before the road was made that leads by the Orthodox Church."

"The credit system was then in vogue and the storekeeper would sell his goods and charge them and settle once a year. He frequently took a note for his dues and if any men owed him and would not pay him he had the power by law to carry him to jail, and I remember to have seen them carried to jail for debt." Keith said that the grocery store used to sell liquor at three cents a glass and he could remember going in the store and seeing pipes of rum, gin, brandy and wine and anyone could have it for three cents. Keith also said that soon after the War of 1812, military spirit ran pretty high. There were all sorts of voluntary military companies. Musters were held on the old common and visited by spectators. There were perhaps 12 or 14 military companies out on the common and it looked as if it were a holiday it was enjoyed by people of all ages. The boys formed companies and went to the drills with wooden guns.

Undoubtedly the most famous murder ever to be committed in East Bridgewater was the Sheldon tragedy. Kimball Sheldon was formerly associated with the firm of Rogers & Sheldon, a large rolling mill and tack manufacturing firm in East Bridgewater. He was supposed to have been extremely prosperous; in a single year according to one statement, he made over \$30,000.00. He lived in luxury on Central Street where the new part of the Central Cemetery is across from Central School. He was attached to sports and kept seven thoroughbred horses. The rol-

ling mill burned but neither Mrs. Rogers nor Mr. Sheldon wished to rebuild. At that time, he was said to have property estimated in value of about one-half million dollars. He then began to invest his money in a long series of disasters. He invested in all sorts of stocks and investment companies which failed. The losses of Mr. Sheldon — Tennessee land deals, Texas realty speculation, gradually eroded his fortune. In the case of the failure of one company, The American Loan and Trust Company, he was held responsible for some of the debts of the corporation. Because he was at one time a man of such wealth, as fortunes went in the town, when he declared that he was poor, few helped or believed in him. He was thought still to be a rich man, living a life of a miser. He began to invest with even more abandon and to put his money in more desperate schemes. He gradually sold off his horses and carriages, his tools, the contents of his greenhouse, until his estate was absolutely bare.

At the time the tragedy occurred, the only thing to eat in the house was a small piece of butter two inches square, a pound of sugar, a little salt. The only living things upon the premises which once was such a bountiful estate, were a calf, two kittens, a hen and six chickens. Everything else had been used up or destroyed or sold. Some people have had dreams that they have been in a closed room with the walls gradually closing in around them. Sheldon was in that kind of position. He had seen things dwindle and dwindle and the knot closing tighter and tighter until with winter coming on in 1908 he could not see where he could get the money to pay for coal, the taxes and the interest on the mortgage on his home, and this unhinged him. Mr. Sheldon began to contemplate killing his wife and shooting himself, believing that Mrs. Sheldon, who had always been nervous, could not survive the shock of his death and further believing the shock of learning the desperate situation would kill her. She was ill for some days with sciatica.

Seventy-eight years old, broken down in fortune, mind and body, worn out by lack of sleep and fatigue, on Friday, September 1908, he went to his library, opened the second drawer in the cabinet and took out a 22-calibre revolver. Seeking his wife's room, he found her asleep and he pressed the revolver near her temple and fired and then proceeded to hit her with an iron bar. He then took such time as he desired to make a few arrangements of his own. He went to his next door neighbor, Mrs. Carl Sturgis, who had been in the habit of passing the evenings with Mrs. Sheldon, and told her not to come in the evening. Then, he mailed letters from the post office. He then went to the site of his old rolling mill to gaze upon what remained at the place where he made his money in the days of prosperity. He gassed himself to death at 4 o'clock on Saturday morning. After the death of Mr. Sheldon a reporter went around the once splendid estate,

then in need of paint. In the carriage house, in place of the beautiful carriages, was only one old hack hardly worth taking away. The beautiful conservatory was dark and gloomy with darkened glass; there was not a flower or plant to show its once beautiful condition. In the sheds were remnants of the things once used around a fine estate and hardly a tool was whole or in condition to use. The fences around the property were falling down in places and the garden itself overgrown with weeds. Poor Mr. Sheldon — he was the victim of speculation. He suffered from the necessities of life when once he had all.

Perhaps he was not the nicest of fellows anyway. According to Mr. Samuel Fuller, Mr. Sheldon used to come out of his house and stab the boys' footballs if they landed in his yard. The boys in retaliation would urinate into the maple syrup cans that Mr. Sheldon put on his trees.

The first part of the 20th century was static in East Bridgewater. The population in 1900 was 3025 and in 1940 was 3822. Economically the area was declining in importance. Industry moved elsewhere and the town was too far from Boston to enjoy any suburban type growth.

There were however, some interesting people. J.K. Alexander became the world's largest dahlia grower. The Dahlia King, he was a hybridizer of many new varieties and as a result there are still today a good many varieties of dahlias that have the names of local people who in the 1920s were friends or relatives of Mr. Alexander. He farmed many acres off Central Street in the area where the housing for the elderly is now located.

M. Clifton Edson started at the age of 14 as a trumpet soloist and the band he organized became famous. His concerts on the common attracted crowds from the whole South Shore. Lennie Knapp wrote a poem about him:

*When Clifton plays the trumpet
All other sounds recede.
We rise on wings of music
From mundane hungers freed.
When Clifton plays the trumpet
Our hearts are healed of pain.
Forgotten is our doubting,
Our faith restored again.
When Clifton plays the trumpet,
All heaven approve the song.
Trumpets blown by angel lips
his golden tones prolong.*

Michael McCarthy served the town as clerk for 22 years and as selectman for 19 years, was chairman of the committee that built the Central School and new

high school, and was on his way to important state office at the time of his death. Elected representative in 1942, he ran for Secretary of State in 1954 and was appointed Commissioner of Veterans Services in 1955. His paper, "The Town Teller" went to all the East Bridgewater servicemen during World War II. When death took him he was clearly in line for even higher political honors.

East Bridgewater began to change radically in 1950 when the population reached 4412 and then 5359 in 1955 and 6139 in 1960. The suburban growth of Boston finally was felt. The population now is approaching 10,000. Since the area of East Bridgewater is 17.28 square miles, it can absorb many more people before it reaches the density of some of the surrounding towns.

If East Bridgewater was as thickly populated as Whitman, its population would exceed 30,000. The increase in population has resulted in the average East Bridgewater citizen being much younger than his counterpart in the 1930s and 1940s. Nearly half the population is now under 19 years in age.

The town has remained white in racial stock. Its population is 98.9 per cent white. Of the foreign born, 35 per cent are Canadians and 15 per cent are Italian. As one would expect, the percentage of high school graduates and of college graduates has risen steadily and so has the percentage of Democrats and Independents as opposed to Republicans. The working population has gradually become a commuting one and the number of people working in the town itself has steadily declined.

In 1969 there were 1854 houses in the town. The high percentage of these (82%) were owned by the occupants. Only 17% were rented. This is a higher percentage than the average for Greater Brockton, where 63% of the houses are owner occupied.

The striking changes are illustrated by home building. Between 1950 and 1954, 160 homes were built. Between 1955 and 1959, 140 homes were built. In 1960, 51 homes went up and in 1961 there were 65 constructed. Forty-five were built in 1962 and 81 in 1963. The total for this period 1950-1963 is more than for the entire preceeding 50 years. All of these trends in youth, education, work habits, building, have continued through the 1960s and will accelerate in the 1970s. With the growth has come debt. About 93% of the debt in the post-war period has been for schools.

Church life in the postwar period was marked by the destruction by fire and rebuilding of the Catholic Church along with the long ministry to the Catholic Community of Father Daniel Scully. There were two well remembered ministries in the Protestant churches. From 1944 to 1949, Alex Porteus led the Methodist Church in a renewal. He was responsible for digging out the basement as a big assembly room and putting in a new kitchen. At the Congregational church, Rev. James Workman instilled vitality. The Swedenborgians prospered during the

1950s because of the ministry of Rev. Paul Zacharias. The churches however mirrored the general decline of religious interest in the country and ceased to play a central role in town affairs.

The old First Church had its steeple blown off in the hurricane of 1938. With vengeance, the steeple came plunging back through the roof of the meetinghouse. Although the wreckage was cleared and the roof patched, the steeple itself was not replaced until 25 years later, in 1968. Indeed, in 1961 the church voted to get bids on tearing down the old meetinghouse, whose foundations were rotted away and which had not been painted since 1947.

However, in a curious way the First Church became once more a part of the play it had been the prime actor in. Perhaps the final chapter of the church's history and the town's history will prove to be the most unusual part of the story.



George Whitefield, whose preaching stirred tremendous controversy in New England and led to a division within the town.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

All four town offices of the original Standish grant have to be consulted for East Bridgewater material, as well as the offices of those towns whose boundaries include land that was once part of East Bridgewater, such as Whitman and Halifax. In West Bridgewater, the small museum of the Old Bridgewater Historical Society contains some interesting items. The Massachusetts Historical Society in Boston has material about Edward Everett's stay in town and some valuable maps. All of the old churches have material. The town libraries have scrapbooks and other curiosities, and the East Bridgewater Public Library has a historical room. This is the first separately printed history of East Bridgewater. The student in pursuit of family trees will find three books particularly helpful in hunting genealogy —

Nahum Mitchell's, *History of the Early Settlement of Bridgewater*, which contains many family trees as well as a brief sketch of the original Bridgewater settlement through 1840. Reprinted in 1970.

Vital Records of East Bridgewater to the Year 1850, which was printed by the New England Historic Genealogical Society in 1917, and reproduces a number of the records of the town, particularly the First Church records of birth, marriage, and death.

Epitaphs in Old Bridgewater, by Williams Latham, which has accounts of all the cemeteries and lists the tombstone inscriptions in them. Printed in 1882.

A great deal of interesting lists appear in an article by William Allen on the history of East Bridgewater in D. Hamilton Hurd's *History of Plymouth County*, 1884.

Obviously the various family histories that have been printed privately about leading New England lines have some material as does *Sibley's Harvard Graduates*. Waiting to be researched are the back files of local weekly and daily newspapers.

Anyone with a desire to help save the town's history could do well to get local businesses of long standing to give their records to the library or church and to ask older people to turn over what they have for safekeeping. Tape recorded interviews with some of the older people would be extremely valuable.

I would be glad to suggest other projects for saving the history of East Bridgewater as well as topics for papers, and I would be glad to help get printed any papers on local topics. For example, a report of the start of telephone service would probably capture some original reminiscences which in a few more years will be lost to us.

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Wb.



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(Copy of Original Deed for the Purchase of Old Bridgewater)

Nash and Constant Southworth in behalf
of all the townsmen of the town of Duxbury
do to him and their heirs forever
In return we will of the said Ousamequin
pay him unto the said my hand the 23 of m^{ch}
1649

him of  Ousamequin

In consideration of the aforesaid bargain
and sale we the said Miles Standish
Samuel Nash and Constant Southworth do
bind ourselves to pay unto the said Ousamequin
for and in consideration of the said tract
of land as followeth

7 Coats and a half in broad
9 hatchets
9 hoes
20 knives
4 moose skins
10 coats of cotton

Miles Standish
Samuel Nash.
Constant Southworth

Nash and Constant Southworth in behalf of all townsmen of the town of Duxbury to them and their heirs forever. In witness whereof I the said Ousamequin have hereunto set my hand this 23d of March 1649.

In consideration of the aforesaid bargain and sale we the said Miles Standish Samuel Nash and Constant Southworth do bind ourselves to pay unto the said Ousamequin for and in consideration of the said tract of land as followeth; 7 coats a yard and a half to a coat, 9 hatchets, 8 hoes 20 knives, 4 moose skins, 10 yards and a half of cotton. Miles Standish. Samuel Nash. Constant Southworth.

— Translation by Stella J. Snow.

(Copy of Original Deed for the Purchase of Old Bridgewater)

[illegible]

Witness these presents that I, Ousamequin Sachem, of the county of Poconocket, have given granted enfeofed and sold unto Miles Standish of Duxbury, Samuel Nash and Constant Southworth of Duxbury aforesaid in behalf of all the townsmen of Duxbury aforesaid; a tract of land usually called Satucket, extending in the length and breadth thereof as followeth, that is to say, from the wear (weir) at Satucket, seven miles due east, and from said wear seven miles due west, and from the said wear seven miles due north, and from the said wear seven miles due south. The which tract the said Ousamequin hath given granted enfeofed and sold unto the said Miles Standish, Samuel Nash and Constant Southworth in behalf of all the townsmen of Duxbury with all the immunities, privileges and profits whatsoever belonging to the said tract of land, with all and singular al woods, underwoods lands meadows rivers brooks rivulets etc. to have and hold to the said Miles Standish Samuel



The Mitchell Farm, East Bridgewater.

THE C. B. MITCHELL FARM.

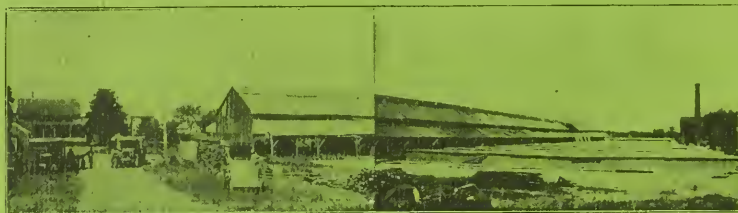
Located on Bedford Street, East Bridgewater, and owned by C. B. Mitchell. Contains 15 acres, keeps 20 cows. Purchased by Mr. Mitchell in 1907. He then cut 1800 pounds of hay, and no ensilage. Now cuts 40 tons of hay and 200 tons of ensilage. Operates the East Bridgewater Milk Route, selling 250 quarts daily. Mr. Mitchell is some farmer, and no doubt his is the banner place for production in the Bridgewaters. He is one of our progressive citizens, Selectmen and Overseer of East Bridgewater and a booster for every advancement.

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Our Bricks are the hardest common brick manufactured in New England. On June 11, 1915, an official test by New England Bureau of Tests, Boston, our body brick showed only 6.50 per cent absorption.



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Showing Forty-two of our Employees





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